



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

ADMINISTRATION for CHILDREN and FAMILIES
Administration on Children, Youth and Families
 1250 Maryland Avenue, S.W.
 Washington, D.C. 20024

JUN 19 2014

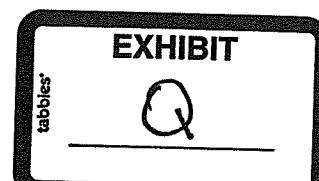
Mr. Richard A. Berry
 Executive Director
 Mississippi Department of Human Services
 750 North State Street
 Jackson, Mississippi 39202

Dear Mr. Berry:

Thank you for permitting the Children's Bureau (CB) to observe the Evaluation and Monitoring Unit's case record review process in Region 5W. While the purpose of the visit was not to make a formal evaluation, the visit did provide an opportunity for CB regional staff to obtain a clearer understanding of your case record review processes as we continue to collaborate with Mississippi to ensure that the state has a fully functioning Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) system. We believe that when states have a fully functioning CQI system they are better equipped to self-monitor the child welfare outcomes and use the data to make ongoing improvements to better serve the children and families in the state. This observational experience of the Case Record Review portion of the CQI afforded us the opportunity to confirm the existence of current review practices and identify strategies that will help inform practice and support program improvement efforts in your state's CQI system.

The following provides a summary of our understanding of Mississippi's current CQI system functioning for the Case Review Component as identified in Information Memorandum ACYF CB-IM-12-07 (IM 12-07). Within your review structure, as it relates to the upcoming Round 3 of the Child and Family Services Review (CFSR), it was observed that the state has in place:

- A statewide, consistent case record review process of in-home and foster care cases;
- A training process for reviewers;
- A process to prevent conflict of interest by ensuring that peer reviewers are recruited from other counties;
- A quality assurance process to review consistency and accuracy of ratings;
- Post-review debriefing sessions in the evenings; however, we recommend that this process be strengthened by a more structured process that includes the recording of what was discussed during each meeting with the goal of enhancing and improving practice within the region;
- A consistent method of case selection and case elimination process;
- A case participant interview process;



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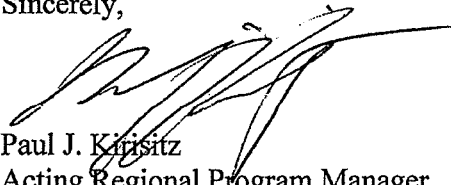
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We found that there may be opportunities for enhancements which include:

- Expanding the case participant interview process to include the selection of other vested individuals with knowledge of the case such as foster parent/caretaker, therapists, etc. in addition to the parent, child, and caseworker;
- Consistency in how interview information is documented, and how the information is used to influence ratings;
- Ensure that the rating provided on each item is supported by documentation. This allows for Quality Assurance (QA) staff to do a thorough review of the case and it also allows an opportunity for constructive feedback to the counties and regions to improve practice;
- Enhance CQI staff development for greater consistency across CQI activities (interviewing, QA process).

We recognize that there may be resource, capacity, and other contextual issues that play a role in improvement and enhancement efforts and the CB would like to explore potential technical assistance needs as we continue our conversations around your CQI processes, the CFSR, and your work on the Child and Family Services Plan. We welcome any additional information, corrections or feedback so that, together, we have a full picture of your CQI system including any challenges and opportunities facing Mississippi at this time. We look forward to working with you to improve your CQI system. Please contact your Child Welfare Program Specialist, Anthony Bingham at (404) 562-0019 or by email at <mailto:anthony.bingham@acf.hhs.gov>, if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,



Paul J. Kirisitz
Acting Regional Program Manager
Region IV
Children's Bureau

cc: Anthony Bingham, Child Welfare Program Specialist; Children's Bureau, Atlanta, GA